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INDICATORS OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF SPORTS AND RECREATIONAL TOURISM AS AN INTEGRAL PRODUCT OF RURAL DESTINATIONS

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Abstract: Given that we live in a very stressful time, it is clear that modern man needs rest and peace in order to restore the necessary energy. That energy is the key to success for normal functioning. Rural destinations are precisely such "oases of peace" where it is possible to return to traditional values and nature, as a healthy lifestyle prerequisites. Even more, rural destinations enable the exercise of sports and recreational activities. The paper started from the hypothesis that sports and recreation are the best prevention of anxiety and stress, and that rural destinations are in themselves an environment that contributes to betterment. A survey was conducted among 317 tourists of the rural destination of Vrdnik, and the results showed that tourists enjoy sports and recreational activities and that they are the "best medicine" in the fight against stress.

Keywords: Sports and recreational tourism, rural destinations, stress, Vrdnik

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Introduction

Today, a large number of people participate in sports actively or as observers, and almost everyone longs for a vacation (Penić et al., 2016). Although the connection between sport and tourism has long been established, it has now taken on a form of global importance (Gatersleben, Appleton, 2007); a lot of media attention was devoted to it, which caused raising awareness among people when it comes to health and benefits brought by sports and tourism. Sports-recreational tourism represents a form of tourism in which the emphasis is on active leisure time (Vujko, Plavša, 2014).

Whether it's activities on the ground, in the air or in the water, one thing is certain - tourists who spend their free time in this way are constantly looking for new destinations and ways to satisfy their need for activities (Vujko, Gajić, 2014). If we were to say that the present is extremely conditioned by exposure to stress, then destinations that allow the exercise of sports and recreational activities are highly valued. Such destinations are the base for the development of rural, sports-recreational, health and other compatible forms of tourism. Nevertheless, rural destinations in themselves have more predispositions for the development of sports and recreational tourism (Petrović et al., 2016). This is because sports-recreational tourism represents an excellent type of supplementary tourist offer with traditional values (Antić et al., 2015), which completes and enriches the tourist stay. The most common form of sport and recreation in rural destinations is cycling, mountain climbing (plain hiking), horse riding, swimming, but also flying where it is possible.

The paper started from the initial hypothesis that sports and recreation are the best prevention of anxiety and stress, that is, that engaging in activities in nature is very compatible. Namely, the natural, i.e., rural environment in itself stimulates movement, which is a characteristic of sports-recreational tourism. We examined the motives and attitudes for engaging in sports-recreational tourism and came to the conclusion that tourists consider sports-recreational tourism as the best "medicine" for prevention and combating stress, but also that staying in rural areas is unimaginable without sport and recreation.

Methodology

The survey was conducted in the area of the rural destination Vrdnik on Fruška Gora. Fruška Gora Mountain is located between 45° 00' and 45° 15' north latitude and between 16° 37' and 18° 01' east longitude. It is a Mountain in the northern part of Srem (South-western Vojvodina) i.e. south-eastern periphery of the vast Pannonian Plain. It has a total surface area of 21,500 km², which makes 24.3% of the whole

territory of the Republic of Serbia (Đurđev et al., 2010; Vujko, Plavša, 2014). 317 weekend tourists who spent their weekends in this place in Fruško Gora, near Novi Sad were examined. The research was part of a wider research project, and the paper presents responses grouped by similarity. A survey containing 28 questions was used, and the research lasted from March to October 2022.

The Chi-square test (Pearson Chi-Square Test) was used as the method of analysis. The test showed statistical differences in respondents' answers in relation to gender, as the most common type of comparison in respondents' answers. The assumption was that there was no difference in the answers. Statistically significant differences are taken for those having $p < 0.05$.

Results and discussion

A total of 317 respondents, visitors to the rural village of Vrdnik in Fruškogora, participated in the research. Of that number, there were 129 male and 188 female respondents (Table 1).

Table 1. Gender

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Male	129	40,7
	Female	188	59,3
	Total	317	100,0

Table 2 showed that respondents most often enjoy walking (96 respondents), but also playing game with ball (soccer, basketball, tennis, etc.) on the field (72 respondents), then ride a bicycle (which can be rented) on paths through the mountain (64 respondents). Tourists also swim a lot in the pools. Other activities (such as running, gym and similar) are less common among respondents.

Table 2. Exercising sports and recreational tourism

		Gender		Total
		Male	Female	
What additional forms of sports - recreational tourism do you practice?	Cycling	23	41	64
	Walking (hiking)	58	38	96
	Swimming in pools	7	48	55
	Ball court games	31	41	72
	Riding horses	6	3	9
	Running	3	3	6
	Trim track and equipment for exercise at open	1	8	9
	Gym i fitness	0	6	6
Total		129	188	317

Looking at table 3, it can be concluded that there was no statistically significant difference in the responses of respondents in relation to gender. First of all, this means that the respondents' answers are uniform.

Table 3. Pearson Chi-Square

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	44,175 ^a	7	,000

Table 4 showed answers grouped by importance, that is, similarity. Here, the respondents gave an answer to the question "why" they practice various recreational activities during their stay at the destination. The answers were very interesting. The largest percentage of respondents answered that practicing sports and recreational activities during their stay at destination helps them rest better. Namely, participating in sports and recreational activities, the respondents get "tired", that is, their muscles work and extra calories are consumed. This positive fatigue affects better sleep, and thus rest. It is interesting that the responses of both male (42) and female (40)

respondents were uniform regarding this question. No other answer to the question produced such uniform responses. Therefore, it can be concluded that people generally need much more sports and recreational activities and quality sleep, which does not seem to be the case in cities. Next, by number of answers, was the answer that sports and recreational activities expel negative energy (62 respondents). This is an answer that supports the development of sports and recreational tourist offers, as a complementary tourist offer of rural destinations. In this way, people practice sports and recreational activities as a prevention of various diseases that are acquired by long-term exposure to stressful situations. Here, sports and recreational activities are perceived as the "best medicine" in the prevention of various diseases. Two other answer categories were equally represented and both had a high number of answers. Those were groups of answers that respondents take care of their health (53) and that being in nature cannot be imagined without some sports and recreational activity (47). All in all, the answers to this group of questions confirmed the initial hypothesis that sports and recreation are the best prevention of anxiety and stress, and that rural destinations in themselves are an environment that contributes to betterment.

Table 4. Reasons for participating in sports and recreational activities

		Gender		Total
		Male	Female	
Why do you carry out additional sports and recreational activities in Vrdnik?	It helps me get very tired, so I sleep better	42	40	82
	I throw negative energy out of me	25	37	62
	Staying in nature is unthinkable without sports and recreational activities	13	34	47
	I take care of my health	10	43	53
	I feel good	20	9	29
	When I return to the city, I feel reborn	19	25	44
Total		129	188	317

Also, as in the previous question, respondents' answers regarding sports and recreational activities did not show any statistical significance in comparison to gender, because $p=0.000$.

Table 5. Pearson Chi-Square

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	27,255 ^a	5	,000

Conclusion

It can be said that the relationship between sports and recreational activities, rural destinations and tourism in the modern world has taken on a symbiotic character (Petrović et al., 2015). Not only do sports-recreational activities improve tourism by offering an increasing number of tourist-attractive elements, but also, sports-recreational activities represent complementary tourist motives of rural destinations and a way to enrich the offer, and also to extend the stay of tourists (Vujko et al., 2016).

Changes in the world tourist market lead to an increase in the variety of types of tourists and their needs. Adventurous and active vacation have become an important segment of the tourism industry as same as also the practice of sports activities are recognized as an important means of preserving health whereby tourism representing a kind of catalyst for such activities.

It is important to recognize the potential of the destination and then develop in that direction. Rural destinations in themselves represent an excellent potential for practicing sports-recreational activities (Cutumisu, Cottrell, 2004), and as we had the opportunity to see in the research, the respondents confirmed that such an environment stimulates and encourages them to practice sports and recreation.

Destinations must recognize the importance of such an offer and work to arrange the conditions for the exercise of sports and recreational activities. In particular, the destination Vrdnik has arranged trim and hiking trails, it is possible to rent a bicycle, it is possible to ride off-road as well as carriage driving, the fields for group sports are also arranged, as well as numerous swimming pools. It can be pointed out that Vrdnik is an example of good practice that many other destinations should follow. Because prevention must come before treatment and rehabilitation, and sports and recreational activities are a healthy base on which everything else can be built upon.

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